

# Washington State Comprehensive Tolling Study

The Washington State Transportation Commission has launched a study of the state's transportation system to determine the feasibility of using tolls to finance construction of badly needed new highways and bridges and to better manage congestion in the state. The study was mandated by the Legislature in 2005.

The purpose of the Commission's Comprehensive Tolling Study is to help the state make policy-level decisions on if, where, when and how to use tolling by providing a practical step-by-step strategy for Washington.

Tolls are not new to Washington, where they have been used extensively to fund construction of major bridges. Since the 1940s, 15 bridges have been constructed using financing backed by tolls, including Evergreen Point Bridge, Hood Canal Bridges, the Tacoma Narrows Bridges, Spokane River Bridge, Vancouver/Portland Bridge and more. Currently, two toll facilities, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project, are authorized as toll facilities and are currently under construction. There are also several tolling proposals in various stages of study.

Nationally, interest in tolling as an alternative or supplement to motor vehicle and fuel taxes has grown in

response to budgetary constraints and increased levels of congestion. Since the early 1990s, tolls have been used to finance new highways or bridges in Florida, Texas, South Carolina, California and Colorado among others. Tolls and user fees have also proven effective in managing congestion on heavily traveled urban highways. They have been used successfully in Minnesota, California and Texas to improve the capacity of existing roads, to provide express commute lanes, and to offer a more reliable commute to drivers who choose to pay a fee to use the tolled facility. These programs have met with considerable success, and studies have shown that they are popular with motorists from all walks of life. Similar projects are currently planned for Georgia, Oregon, Virginia and the Washington, D.C. area.

The comprehensive tolling study will broadly address tolling in Washington and identify fiscal constraints, current and emerging technologies, social and environmental impacts, and legal and regulatory constraints. The study will also help the Commission to identify candidate projects for tolling.

The study will conclude in July 2006 when the comprehensive report will be delivered.

**For more information visit: [www.wstc.wa.gov](http://www.wstc.wa.gov)**

